

MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

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The Spirituality of a Missionary is led by the Holy Spirit; therefore, the missionary needs to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. This relationship with Christ and His Spirit serves as a foundation to sustain the missionary's prayer life. "An essential characteristic of missionary spirituality is intimate communion with Christ." (RM, 88) All the efforts and actions of the missionary are not fruitful unless they are fueled by prayer. Ultimately it is Christ and His Spirit who provide the love that a missionary is to share with those they serve. For it is only through His love that missionaries are able to love and unite others to Christ; this is all a work of the Holy Spirit. "It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit." (RM, 87) We can only give what we have and that is why prayer is so important: if we are not filled with him then we are only giving ourselves. Apart from Him we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). In scripture Jesus gives us the example by his constant communion with the Father, passing many nights in prayer. The Spirituality of a missionary is founded on this communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit.



Christ has given Church the sacraments as tools to preserve this communion; She knows that without the grace of the sacraments the union could not stand. Therefore, the missionary must readily use these tools, especially the gift of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation. It is also important to have a spirit of love and gratitude for the Church. "Only profound love for the Church can sustain the missionary's zeal" (RM 89). If Christ left us the Church for our salvation missionaries must understand Her role and love Her as Christ did until the end. The Church is Christ's Bride and our Mother She unites all to the Mystical Body of Christ.

Furthermore, missionaries must renounce themselves and seek to fulfill the Lord's will and not their own desires, for they are bearers of a message not their own, and are responsible for faithfully transmitting it. Therefore, the virtue of obedience must define the missionary because they are 'sent' by God on mission and consequently answer to him for all of their actions. The virtue of poverty encourages a healthy detachment from material things, including personal preference and will, which is essential for the missionary to fulfill God's mission, not their own.

Lastly, Mary is the first missionary and Christian, and she is a model for all, walking before all in this pilgrimage of faith. Mary will lead the missionary to Christ and will maximize all the efforts of the mission. "Mary is the model of that maternal love which should inspire all who cooperate in the Church's apostolic mission for the rebirth of humanity." (RM 92) Devotion to the Mother of Christ and the mother of all nations will prove to benefit the missionary, for the Mother wants the best for her children.

Living for Christ and with Christ will undoubtedly animate the missionary to have true joy and peace that this world is so sorely lacking. If Christ is not shared joyfully and in charity then He will most likely not be received; the missionary gives true hope that they have found in Christ.

"The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith." (RM91) Therefore, the missionary needs to first receive Christ and his presence in order to experience the love and joy that he is obligated to share.

¹Pope John Paul II, On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, *Redemptoris Missio*, (1990), 88

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